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WHA/FO CMCMULLEN, WHA/BSC MDRUCKER, BFRIEDMAN, MDASCHBACH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2034/11/06  
TAGS: MCAP PREL PGOV PINR PA  
SUBJECT: LUGO INSTALLS NEW COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES

REF: ASUNCION 637

CLASSIFIED BY: Liliana Ayalde, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶11. (U) President Fernando Lugo replaced armed forces commander Cibar Benitez November 6 with former army commander Juan Oscar Velazquez Castillo, who was relieved of his army post November 4. Post has worked with Velazquez in his capacity as army commander since May 20.

¶12. (U) Velazquez entered the army in 1978 and reached the rank of Brigadier General in 2007. He pursued military studies in Brazil and Spain, but does not hold an academic degree. In 2007 he participated in an official visit to the Massachusetts National Guard. He taught several military-related courses in the 1990s. He is the recipient of several medals, including the Paraguayan Medal of Honor. Velazquez is from San Pedro Department. He was born October 16, 1956, is married to Dolly Sanchez Davalos and has three children, Dolly, Diana, and Gabriela.

¶13. (C) COMMENT: Former commander Benitez was an ardent advocate for American assistance, but was not always seamlessly integrated with the Lugo administration. Because Velazquez appears closer to Lugo, he will likely be a more effective advocate for the armed forces within the cabinet. While Velasquez is viewed as an indecisive and weak leader, Post does not believe the change will significantly hinder mil-to-mil collaboration. END COMMENT.  
AYALDE